

# DOCTRINE OF CIRCUMCISION

## I. Vocabulary.

### A. Hebrew:

1. מוּל – mul; verb; to circumcise, to cut off. Used 71x.
2. מוּלָה – mulah; noun; circumcision. Used 1x, Exo.4:26.
3. עָרַל – -aral; verb; to be uncircumcised; foreskin to be uncovered.
4. עָרֵל – -arel; adj.; literally “the uncircumcised”.

### B. Greek:

1. περιτέμνω – peritemno; verb; literally, “to cut around”; circumcise. Used 17x.
2. περιτομή – peritome; noun; circumcision, circumcised. Used 36x.
3. κατατομή – katatome; noun; literally “to mutilate by cutting”; translated “false circumcision”. Used 1x, Phi.3:2
4. ἀκροβυστία – akrobusitia; noun; uncircumcision, foreskin. Used 19x.

## II. Definition: Physical circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin of a male person. It has been practiced by many cultures over the centuries. Biblical circumcision is a religious ritual. Female circumcision involves the surgical removal of the clitoris. It was never a practice authorized in the Bible. It destroys the female’s capacity to derive pleasure from sex and as such, amounts to mutilation. Certain societies practice it to insure marital fidelity among their women. Male circumcision in reference to the Jewish people a.k.a. “the circumcision” (cf.Gal.2:7) have practiced it since the days of the first Hebrew, Abraham.

## III. God first established circumcision as the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Gen.17:10-14

- A. Abraham (and his entire male household) was circumcised when he was 99 years old. Gen.17:23-27
- B. From that day forward all Jewish male children were to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth (cf.Gen.17:12).
- C. It was commanded as a part of the Mosaic Covenant. Lev.12:3
- D. Non-Jews could not participate in the feast of Passover (symbolic for salvation) unless they were first circumcised. Exo.12:43-48
- E. Moses’ failure to circumcise his son almost cost him his life. Exo.4:24-26
- F. Failure to be circumcised resulted in excommunication from Jewish society. Gen.17:14
- G. The reversionistic Exodus Generation failed to have their sons circumcised after coming out of Egypt. Jos.5:3-7
- H. Jesus was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day in compliance with the Law. Luk.2:21

## IV. Circumcision is merely a symbol of the reality and need for an inner and spiritual circumcision not made with human hands, but by the Spirit of God. Deu.10:16; 30:6; Jer.4:4; Rom.2:28,29 cf.Col.2:11

- A. Deu.10:16 constitutes a command to circumcise the heart and not to stiffen the neck indicating that +V to the Law demands the laying aside of that which is useless (analogous to the removal of the foreskin).
  - B. Deu.30:6 indicates that it is God that circumcised the heart of man.
  - C. Jer.4:4 warns the Jew that if they will circumcise their hearts, God's wrath will not fall.
  - D. Rom.2:28,29 affirms that a true (complete) Jew is one that has circumcision of the heart.
  - E. Conversely, physical circumcision apart from spiritual renders the physical as uncircumcised. Cf.Rom.2:25
- V. The spiritual significance of the ritual of circumcision is the overruling of the absolute power of the ISTA/OSN as taught in Col.2:11, *"and in Him (positional sanctification) you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh (analogous to the foreskin made possible through Christ's judgment in His body on the cross) by the circumcision of Christ (victory over sin/ISTA).*
- A. All believers in Jesus Christ have overcome the absolute rulership of the STA though its severance at saving faith. Cp.Gal.5:24 where the analogy is crucifixion.
  - B. Hence, all believers constitute the "true circumcision". Phi.3:3
  - C. Christ in His humanity was the operative removing the body of flesh as to personal sins emanating from the STA by receiving the judgment for sins in His own body evidenced in His death, burial and resurrection. Col.2:12
  - D. This removed the absolute authority of the STA and giving mankind the ability to overturn the consequence of spiritual death. Col.2:13-14
  - E. The circumcision for the believer is as a result of saving faith, the one sin Christ could not die for i.e., unbelief (synonymous with the one piece of foreskin). Cp.Joh.16:9
  - F. The STA's lusts experientially can be overruled/isolated in time via confession. 1Joh.1:9
  - G. Furthermore, the ritual is not binding in the present dispensation (1Cor.7:19; Gal.6:15), just the abiding reality made possible by the 3 adjustments to God (SAJG, R<sub>B</sub>AJG and MAJG).
- VI. Circumcision (along with any other legal work) was never intended as a requirement for salvation, as seen in the case study of Abraham in Rom.4:9-12
- A. Paul shows legalistic Jews that Abraham was declared righteous/justified while still "uncircumcised".
  - B. Therefore, all that follow "in the steps of faith" (3 adjustments to God) have Abraham as their father.
  - C. This includes believer Jews as well as uncircumcised Gentiles. Cf.Rom.3:29,30
- VII. Believing Jewish legalists a.k.a. Judaizers, following their unbelieving counterparts in Judaism, sought to impose circumcision upon the early Gentile Christians. Act.15:5

- A. This first occurred when Paul returned from his first missionary journey in Galatia. Act.14:27,28
- B. The Judaizers came from Jerusalem to Antioch (large Gentile community) and infiltrated their ranks.
- C. They first sought for social segregation between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Gal.2:4,5,11-14
- D. Meanwhile their disciples moved in on the newly founded Gentile churches of Galatia and persuaded them that salvation was not by faith alone. Cf.Gal.1:6,7; 3:1
- E. Immediately upon hearing of this Paul wrote and sent off the Galatian letter.
- F. After much heated debate at Antioch (Act.15:2), a council was called in Jerusalem to resolve the matter (Act.15:6-12).
- G. The clear verdict of James presiding over the Council was that Gentiles are not required to be circumcised.
- H. Hence, the Apostles and early Church affirmed to posterity that salvation was “*by grace through faith*” totally apart from any works. Cp.Eph.2:8-9

**VIII.** In summary:

- A. Removal of the foreskin signifies the reality of overruling and isolating the rulership of the ISTA in the sphere of death (both eternal and temporal).
- B. The foreskin represents the STA with its propensity for sin, human good and human viewpoint.
- C. The foreskin of the heart is initially cut off at the point of salvation.
- D. The HS positionally isolates at salvation through saving faith (Col.2:11,13) and experientially at each subsequent application of Rebound (Rom.2:29; 1Cor.11:31; 1Joh.1:9).
- E. We should beware of legalists that substitute ritual for reality. Cp.Phi.3:2
- F. The uncircumcised state represents either an unsaved and/or unclean condition. Cp.Lev.26:41 (Jews in captivity); 1Sam.17:26,36 (Goliath); Jer.9:25,26; Eze.32:18,32; 44:7; cf.Act.7:51-53; Eph.2:11-16

*“For we are the true circumcision, who worship  
In the Spirit of God and glory of Christ Jesus  
And put no confidence in the flesh”  
Phi.3:3*